

# New Haven Register

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## Anti-budget flier sent with New Haven students

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By Ed Stannard, Register Metro Editor  
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NEW HAVEN — With emotions rising over Mayor John DeStefano Jr.'s proposed \$472.5 million 2010-11 budget, a flier sent home with city students seeking support for education spending has become a target for criticism.

Some parents, as well as the budget watchdog group New Haven Citizens Action Network, said Thursday it was inappropriate for the schools to send city schoolchildren home with a pitch for the Board of Education's position.

"I don't think the Board of Education stands in place of the parents to decide what goes into the children's hands," said Peter Spodick, whose second-grader at Edgewood Magnet School brought the flier home. "I think it's an outrage," he said.

The flier stated: "Tell the Board of Aldermen to say no to a \$17.6 million cut to education." Such a cut, it said, could end the city's school reform efforts and increase class sizes while cutting teachers and closing schools.

The flier urged residents to attend a rally and public hearing held Wednesday. A hearing held last month in the East Rock neighborhood brought out a number of residents questioning spending and revenue assumptions.

DeStefano's proposal would raise city spending by 2.64 percent, while dropping the tax rate 1 mill to 41.21 through spending cuts. Because revaluation is being phased in, the average homeowner would see an 8.8 percent increase in taxes, according to official calculations.

New Haven CAN proposed a 10 percent cut across the board.

Laoise King, chief of external affairs for the city schools, said the administration worked with the Citywide Parent Teacher Organization, made up of members of all school PTOs. School administrators e-mailed it to each principal, who then printed it and had it passed out to students, King said. The flier did not identify who was distributing it.

"We think it's absolutely appropriate because we don't see that we were taking a political stand," King said. "We all feel good about standing up for our budget and letting them know what a 10 percent cut could mean."

Mary Rosario, a member of the Citywide PTO executive committee, said the flier was "not political. ... People who say stuff like that don't know what goes on in the school system.

"I'm just a parent in the school system and that's what our group is about," Rosario said. "We just worry about education and what's going to happen to our kids if there are cuts, that's all."

But Jeffrey Kerekes of New Haven CAN, said the flier misrepresented his group's position by listing potential cuts such as the arts and gym. City officials haven't been willing to hear suggestions for ways to cut the budget proposal without hurting education, he said.

Among other things, he mentioned the number of school administrators, as well as City Hall staff and lobbyists in Hartford and Washington.

"They're trying to split the community, which they've done before," he said of DeStefano's administration.

"He has to sell his budget to the citizens," Kerekes said of the mayor.

He said aldermen asked department heads if they were asked to find savings and their response was that they were only asked not to increase their budgets.

"There's going to be a budget vote coming up in May, and we intend to make sure the aldermen know what our position is," Kerekes said.

Contact Ed Stannard at 203-789-5743.

## Reader Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of nhregister.com.

AnotherTaxPayer wrote on Apr 30, 2010 6:35 AM:

" Who pays for this letter, the paper, the ink, the loss of man hours (to write, print, distribute, etc)? Why would anyone in the BOE believe it was appropriate to use education tax dollars to promote their argument?

The parent Rosario's honest expression that all outsiders are ignorant is one explanation. If her expression is how all the PTO, BOE, teachers, and administrators feel, I guess everyone else's opinions don't count. Even if they are and have been taxpayers, just like the backers of BOE's position.

That expression of disdain for others ideas and actions, and the bigger picture, is probably why we find ourselves in these financial woes. "

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Doyens wrote on Apr 30, 2010 7:34 AM:

" This flyer was not sent home by the PTO. It was sent by the central office with the directive to the principals to copy and distribute it to all the children. All of this was done at taxpayer expense, from the design of the flyer to the equipment used to distribute it, to the cost of printing up thousands of those flyers. The NHPS used the official communication channel to families to promote their view and to distort opponents. This is not political?

The battle over this budget is inherently a political one, a discussion of choices and priorities. To say differently, is dishonest especially in light of the distorted representation of budget opponents. The mayor has presented the budget in meetings around the city more this year than in the past - and like King/Rosario, has consistently and intentionally misrepresented our views and made claims of his own budget cutting which, to be generous, are questionable. This is not political?

With the phased in reveal, the effective tax rate is not an 8.8 percent increase - actually, it is about 12 to 24% depending on where you live and what kind of property you own per the city's own calculations. The increase will affect car and business taxes too. It is the largest proposed increase in the state.

I am part of NH CAN and have been since it was started several years ago. I am involved and supportive of my school, donate money to it every time we're asked and happily support what we are doing in the classroom and all kinds of extra-curricular activities. That doesn't mean there aren't efficiencies especially when NHPS doesn't look for them, talks of expanding administration staff, wild use of consultants and "special assignment" positions and aren't even smart enough to close the windows in the middle of winter. In fact, it is doubtful the central office or the board of ed has a clue about how much money they actually NEED to accomplish real school reform, a concept it universally rejected just two years ago.

We don't know what's going on the public schools? That comment is just stupid. "

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Stringer Bell wrote on Apr 30, 2010 7:48 AM:

" Stop sounding like the broksters and bigots of Guilford. Jimmy McNulty is a natural police. Tru dat. Mos def. "

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edgewood parent wrote on Apr 30, 2010 8:05 AM:

" Laoise King and Mary Rosario are wrong. Their actions are unethical and may even constitute illegal lobbying. My child's homework folder should NEVER be used to distribute lobbying material. (The offensive flier was sent home with our Alderman's daughter as well. Using his child to deliver this message is an outrage.) If the BOE was so certain this is defensible, they should have signed the flier. At the very least, someone making Ms. King's

salary should know how to proofread.

This cynical manipulation of our children undermined what little confidence I had in the BOE's ability to reform our schools. If the BOE has the money to pay Ms. King's salary and to produce and distribute this kind of material, they can endure budget cuts without closing schools, etc. I would suggest that her position be the first cut. "

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mr cheech wrote on Apr 30, 2010 8:16 AM:

" Who should be surprised that the teacher's union is now running the schools? The union tell's school officials and the Mayor to "jump"! and the answer they get is "how high?" Yet New Haven voters continue to vote this Mayor back in office. No leadership, no integrity, no nothing. You get the kind of government you deserve. Now Live with it! "

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Prof. von Chronic wrote on Apr 30, 2010 8:24 AM:

" Smash the teachers union. End this political creation of LAST IN EVERYTHING students excreted from New Haven public schools each year. Magnet schools. Charter schools...ooohhhh. Let's call them Poly-Galactic Learning Campuses. That will make the students smarter but we'll need a little more money. "

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imagine wrote on Apr 30, 2010 8:56 AM:

" Imagine if someone did this in the private sector. Cut salaries, jobs, and healthcare; from the top on down. If they don't like it, tell them to go work in the real world of the private sector. Stop insisting that the taxpayers pay for your exhorbitant salaries, perks, and excellent healthcare; we cannot afford them for ourselves..... "

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Mike wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:07 AM:

" There you go again. "

You're all at each other's throats about what, the cost of a flyer?

This is really about all of you just scraping by nowadays. Isn't it? You wouldn't care if you were financially comfortable and lived in a country where your prospects were just as rosy as they were in the 1950's, would you?

There are 300 million Chinese and Indians who have taken a vast number of jobs Americans used to count on. That's the unfortunate reality of the 21st Century.

A small army of Wall Streeters has pocketed a vast amount of money taking advantage of this reality.

But you feel Wall Street EARNED what it's got? Cars, refrigerators, collateralized debt obligations -- they're all just products in your mind, and Wall Street has just as much right

to make a buck on a CDO as GM does on a Chevy?

Keep at each other, folks. Wrest the cost of that extra ink and paper from the Board of Education. That'll be a life changer -- for all of you. "

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To MIKE wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:24 AM:

" As usual you are diverting the topic and spewing your tired Alinskyite Leftist drivel. "

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StateElectedOfficial wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:29 AM:

" It does seem like it is wrong and deceptive for the mayors administration to use taxpayers money and school children to lobby their own budget proposal. Taxpayers, many of whom are voters have a right to be concerned "

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Nostradamus wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:36 AM:

" Look at what is happening in Greece. The country is bankrupt, and they now have no choice but to impose drastic austerity measures. Public employees have been laid off in droves, and the ones that are left are working for much less.

The U.S. economy is still the strongest in the world, but any economic social group that lives beyond its means, whether it is a middle class family or a country, eventually has to pay the piper, and the piper is here now with his hand out.

We can either accept the reality of this situation and start our own austerity measures now, or they will be forced on us in the future.

It's time we learn to live within our means. Any town or city that spends more than it takes in has got to rein in spending NOW, and without raising taxes. "

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Ken wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:58 AM:

" I am a liberal democrat, but I support the proposal to cut the city's staff instead of raising taxes on homeowners. I am struggling much more as a homeowner the last 5 years than I did as a renter. New Haven's homeowners already have to pay for the expensive schools, the increased busing (it is amazing how much we spend on busing) the city worker's salaries (including Police, BOE, Fire,) and the related pensions for retirees. Please stop hiring new cops thinking the city will be safer (that is not the case)--make the existing cops work more effectively. Teachers, who have difficult jobs dealing with unruly kids, should not have to be cut if these spending cuts are enacted--cut the huge salaries of BOE administrators, like Mayo, instead since their policies do not help students achieve. "

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Concerned Citizen wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:59 AM:

" It's for the kids, it's for the kids, it's for the kids, ... LOL "

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Jekyll Island wrote on Apr 30, 2010 9:59 AM:

" I think MIKE is just pointing out that we are all slaves to a financial system where currency is backed by debt and greed is sanctified. Therefore, we (those who are not in the top 1%) have more in common than not, and should be working together to create radical change aimed at crippling Wall Street and the Banks. "

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Mr Taxpayer wrote on Apr 30, 2010 10:18 AM:

" Way To Go Arizona !!!!!!! "We're all fed up, can't take no more" "

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Uncle Egg wrote on Apr 30, 2010 10:18 AM:

" This is disgusting, turning kids into pawns in a political showdown.

Here's an idea: Figure out what the board's budget would look like if you laid off half the assistant principals and one third of other top-flight administrators.

Until that has been done, I do not want to hear one single peep about the need to cut teachers, sports program or arts classes. "

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D4RV0N wrote on Apr 30, 2010 10:25 AM:

" Peep, Peep, Peep. It's the teachers. Peep. "

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To Liberal Ken wrote on Apr 30, 2010 10:31 AM:

" Hey Liberal,any mention of the single parent family with the absent father or should we say sperm donor ? I guess not - As far as the amount spent on the schools , remember the tax payers of the state have picked up 80% of your billion dollar tab . In the near future,if the education results don't improve, who next do we blame ? Teachers ? Good Ole Boy Network ? Racist society ? ... how bout the absence of the donor ? how about the absence of discipline ? how about the absence of a law abiding role model who doesn't view improving yourself by following rules and learning through education ,provided in the brand new schools as acting like uncle Tom "

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Mike wrote on Apr 30, 2010 10:32 AM:

" Yes, I AM diverting the topic.

You schmucks want to talk about the cost of a flyer, go ahead.

There's an 800 pound gorilla in the room.

That's why I make the big bucks and you don't. "

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Kathy C wrote on Apr 30, 2010 10:47 AM:

" The best part--the "Flyer Plan" failed miserably. Wednesday night, the Aldermanic Chamber was packed with poster carrying parents toting along their kids for emphasis, and not ONE parent spoke in support of increasing the amount of money allocated to education. Instead, they applauded wildly in support of cutting taxes--much to the chagrin of the the Meadow St. fat cats. Are you listening, Reggie? Will Clark? These parents realized pretty quickly that, home owner or renter, any increase in education spending was coming directly out of their pockets. Speakers who identified themselves as NHPS parents pleaded for no increase in taxes, not for an increase in school spending. Looks like Meadow St. will have to get some stronger Kool-Aid for next time. Of course, the tax payers will have to pay for that too! "

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alan wrote on Apr 30, 2010 11:45 AM:

" i would hazard to guess that less than 5% of board of ed employees(non janitorial) live in New Haven so the taxes mean nothing to them. Just a transfer of wealth(which is mostly state reimbursement) to Orange, Guilford, etc. "

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Peter North wrote on Apr 30, 2010 12:26 PM:

" They should send the kids home with employment applications to local businesses. Maybe that would give the parents, oh i mean parent, an idea. "

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Ken wrote on Apr 30, 2010 12:36 PM:

" Hey Liberal Ken, I can't solve the problem of single parent homes Sir. I am just looking at my tax bill and it is scary. I am trying to get the city to understand that I cannot afford another tax increase before the annual budget is passed. I live here and unlike you I am affected by these multi-million dollar schools--I have kids in the system who are being bused across town even though there is a school one block away. Even if the state pays 70%, New Haven still does not have the the tax base (remember Yale is not taxed in a conventional way) to support the other 30% (which is still in the tens of millions of dollars). There are too few businesses here (no mall, no coliseum) and a state of the art school does not mean kids will learn more--I said nothing about blaming a racist society and I would never call a real person a donor because I know that women choose to have kids on their own (single parent homes are nothing new and cannot be solved easily). You suburban people just want to dump on and make crude generalizations about NH--someone is paying taxes here and unlike you, we have a right to complain (not everyone wants to live in the suburbs). "

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GK wrote on Apr 30, 2010 1:23 PM:

" Who ever authorized this should be fired and forced to reimburse the city for costs. "

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